

34/PC

CIA/RR-CB-61-65

S-E-C-R-E-T  
NOFORN

Copy No. 28  
28 December 1961

## CURRENT SUPPORT BRIEF

CZECHOSLOVAKIA ESTABLISHES PRAGUE-HAVANA AIR SERVICE

OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND REPORTS

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

This report represents the immediate views of the  
originating intelligence components of the Office  
of Research and Reports. Comments are solicited.

W - A - R - N - I - N - G

This document contains information affecting the national defense of  
the United States, within the meaning of the espionage laws, Title 18  
USC, Sections 793 and 794, the transmission or revelation of which  
in any manner to an unauthorized person is prohibited by law.

S-E-C-R-E-T  
NOFORN

S-E-C-R-E-T  
NOFORN

CZECHOSLOVAKIA ESTABLISHES PRAGUE-HAVANA AIR SERVICE

The United Kingdom has recently decided to accede to Czechoslovakia's request for overflight privileges and technical landing rights at either Manchester or Prestwick, 1/ opening the way for a Czechoslovak Airlines (CSA) route from Prague to Havana by way of the United Kingdom, Eire, and Canada. CSA has had Prague-Havana rights since December 1960, when Czechoslovakia signed a civil air agreement with Cuba. Although Cuba inaugurated air service to Prague via the Azores in February 1961, 2/ Czechoslovakia has had major difficulties in establishing its route.

Initially, CSA intended to provide air service on one of two routes, either by way of Morocco and the Azores or Eire and Canada. 3/ Both routes, however, included Bermuda. These plans were, in part, frustrated by the unwillingness of the United States to grant transit privileges at Kindley Air Force Base, Bermuda. Unable to acquire these privileges at Bermuda, which are vital to the operation of a southern route, Czechoslovakia turned to the alternative northern and route and arranged for technical landing rights at points within the range of their aircraft.

In March 1961, after some delay, Canada notified Czechoslovakia that its request for technical stops at Gander would be approved. 4/ Canada also has approved a Cuban request for technical stops at Gander, with Halifax or Sydney as alternates. 5/ Eire, which had been delaying approval of Czechoslovakia's request for technical or transit rights pending the United Kingdom decision, will in all probability accede to the request. 6/

The U.K., long successful in delaying a reply to Czechoslovakia's request for civil air rights in the United Kingdom, reached the limit of its stalling tactics when Czechoslovakia informally complained to the President of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) about the delay they were experiencing with some countries in obtaining overflight and technical landing privileges. 7/ Czechoslovakia pointed out that under the terms of the Air Services Transit Agreement, these privileges should be granted simply on request. Faced with the prospect of being formally accused of not honoring its treaty obligations, the United Kingdom advised Czechoslovakia recently that "in principle" its request would be granted. 8/

Both Canada and Eire argue that the issue is primarily one of honoring their international commitments. They claim, furthermore, that should Czechoslovakia be denied transit rights, traffic between Prague and Havana would not be stopped but would be diverted to other carriers, 9/ such as the Compania Cubana de Aviacion, S.A. (Cubana), which now operates a twice weekly air service between Havana and Prague.

Cubana has also been prevented from stopping at Bermuda, and since October Cubana flights eastward to Prague, formerly scheduled through Bermuda and the Azores, have been routed on an experimental basis via Canada and the U.K. or Belgium, returning to Havana via the Azores. 10/ Cuban Bristol Britannia equipment is used and the aircraft are piloted by Cubans. However, several members of the crew, including navigators, are always Czechoslovaks. Thus, CSA personnel are obtaining experience in operating the route, even though the aircraft are at present flying under the auspices of Cuba. 11/

28 December 1961

CIA/RR-CB-61-65

Page 2

S-E-C-R-E-T  
NOFORN

S-E-C-R-E-T

NOFORN

Both Czechoslovakia and Cuba have a shortage of transatlantic equipment. With a total inventory of about eight high-performance aircraft, Czechoslovakia operates three long routes to the Near and Far East, and to Africa, in addition to its European services. Following the crash of two Il-18 aircraft last spring and summer, CSA had to replace Il-18 turboprop service with Il-14 piston-engined service on at least one European international route and had to make some adjustments in its domestic turboprop service. 12/ Recently, CSA announced a tentative schedule of a weekly round-trip flight to Havana using a Britannia aircraft. 13/ However, inauguration of the Prague-Havana route by CSA and the frequency of service will depend on the rapidity with which CSA obtains more long-range aircraft. To assist Czechoslovakia in making up for the shortage of equipment, Cuba has leased at least one Britannia aircraft to CSA under an agreement that permits the Czechoslovakians to operate the aircraft on any route desired by CSA. 14/ A Britannia has been used by CSA on at least one trip from Prague to Mali. Moreover, if present plans for equipment acquisition and adjustment are fulfilled, Cubana intends to turn at least one additional aircraft over to CSA. 15/

Cubana has a fleet of from 25 to 30 British and US manufactured aircraft of which four are Britannias (including the one on loan to CSA), at least one Super G Constellation, and two Viscounts in flyable condition and a number of passenger and cargo C-46, DC-3 and DC-4 aircraft in various stages of repair. 16/ Cuba is planning to sell the US-built aircraft and replace them with long-range Britannia transports and Soviet Il-14 aircraft because of the spare parts inventory problem. All of the 12 Il-14 aircraft on order have already arrived in Cuba. 17/ In addition, the Israeli airline, El Al, reportedly has agreed to sell Cubana four Britannia aircraft, with ten spare engines and a considerable quantity of spare parts. It is one of these aircraft that Cubana plans to turn over to CSA, if the sale is successfully negotiated. Two others will be converted to cargo transports, and the remaining one will be used as a passenger aircraft. 18/

28 December 1961

CIA/RR-CB-61-65

Page 3

S-E-C-R-E-T

NOFORN

S-E-C-R-E-T

Analyst:

25X1A

Sources:

1. State London. Incoming No. 1836, 3 Nov 61. S.
2. State London. Incoming A664, 22 Nov 61. S.
2. State, Havana. Dsp 1278, 6 Dec 60. OFF USE.
- State, Paris/USRO. Polto G 1568, 6 Apr 61. C.
3. State, CA-6139, 19 Jan 61. C.
4. State, Ottawa. Incoming No. 676, 15 Mar 61. C.
- State, Paris/USRO. Polto A 202, 24 Aug 61. C.
5. State, Ottawa. Incoming No. 401, 12 Oct 61. S.
6. State, Dublin. Incoming No. 32, 12 Aug 61. C.
7. State, London. Incoming No. 1766, 30 Oct 61. S.
8. State, London. A 664, 22 Nov 61. S.
- State, Paris/USRO. Polto A Circ. 82, 23 Nov 61. C.
9. State, CW-1676, 23 Aug 61. C.
- State, Ottawa. A-35, 1 Aug 61. C.
10. State, Dublin. Dsp No. 54, 31 Aug 61. C.
11. [REDACTED] 25X1A
12. ABC Guide, Jun-Sep 61. U.
13. State, Prague. A-103, 24 Nov 61. S.
14. State, Prague. Dsp 743, 11 May 61. S/NOFORN
15. [REDACTED]
16. [REDACTED] 25X1A
17. [REDACTED]
18. [REDACTED] 25X1A

28 December 1961

CIA/RR-CB-61-65

Page 4

S-E-C-R-E-T